

February 14, 2006

To: APC, TC, SC, Consultants, Staff  
From: Joe Plankis, Chairman SC  
Subject: Notes From Presentation by Ed McMahon

Following are notes that I took during the presentation that was given by Ed McMahon from the Urban Land Institute on February 9, 2006. Many of you were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts, so I hope this information will be helpful to you as we continue to move through the Comp Plan updating process. If there is anything that I am missing in my notes and you attended the meeting, please feel free to copy everyone with that information. Ed was certainly able to build on the comments and concepts presented in January by Randall Arendt, adding a strong practical aspect to many of the concepts we heard in January.

Kevin Buchheit and Tom Higgins are currently working on scheduling a third speaker, hopefully for later this month. Kevin will pass along more on this, as the details are finalized. My personal thanks to Kevin and the staff for making the arrangements for Ed McMahon's visit to Westfield. It was certainly very worthwhile.

Now for the notes on Ed's presentation:

Development is inevitable for Westfield. Location and available land will be the drivers for that development. Developers will be looking for predictability and certainly when they seek sites for development.

Goals for the community should be:

- A Healthy Environment
- A Vigorous Economy
- A Vibrant Community

Building greener neighborhoods with trees will aid in meeting these goals.

**Image** is fundamentally critical to a community's economic development.

**Surrounding Environment** is the **single** most important factor in the price of a house.

**Downtown housing** is the single hottest concept today.

**Historical Places** are key to physically connecting us to the past in a community and should be preserved. The Mainstreet Program is one of the tools to aid a community in preserving downtown areas. Some of the areas he gave as examples were Riverwalk in downtown San Antonio, Texas and Pike Place Market in Seattle that are some of the most visited areas in the country. Both were almost destroyed with initial plans for redevelopment of those areas. Approximately 80% of everything that has been built in this country has been built since WWII. We should strive to save those structures that have historical value in our community.

In the area of development, we have choices. We should insist on better quality. Ordinances should be passed to separate lot size from density. If a developer builds a quality project, they could be granted a "density bonus" for that quality design. He suggested visiting the following website [www.uli.org](http://www.uli.org) for the Urban Land Institute to view a case study covering this subject.

In the commercial area, he quoted studies that showed that 80% of shoppers would rather shop in a town-center shopping area than a traditional strip mall. The United States has over 500 million square feet of retail space. Over 10% of that space is vacant. There are over 2000 vacant strip malls in the U.S. today. There is over 30 square feet of retail space per person in the U.S., but it is estimated that only 20 square feet per person is what is really required. Ed provided a number of slides that were illustrations of “downtown” shopping areas with parking in the rear of the stores, in many cases with parking garages. He quoted studies with data that showed shoppers spent more time in pedestrian friendly, town center shopping areas and spent an average of \$84.00 per hour in town center shopping areas vs. \$57.50 per hour in enclosed malls.

Ed also gave a number of examples of chain restaurants such as McDonalds and Pizza Hut that were placed in very attractive buildings and attractively landscaped. He stated that the companies planned to do the same old traditional buildings until they were asked by the community to do a better job. All chain restaurant firms have building options they can generally provide only if a community asks for it. Again, it was simply a case of raising the bar.

His suggestions for Westfield were:

- Develop a vision for the future.
- Inventory local resources.
- Build local plans around the enhancement of natural and cultural assets.
- Use education, incentives and voluntary initiatives, not just regulations for better development.
- Pick and chose among development proposals-we do not have to take everything that is presented to us as a community. Be picky and selective.
- Cooperate with resource managers for mutual benefit.
- Consider aesthetics as well as ecology and economics.
- Use “build to lines”, not setback lines in a village or downtown area.

## EDUCATION IS NOT AN EVENT, BUT IT IS A PROCESS.

Based on the unanimous comments from those I spoke with and who attended Ed McMahon’s presentation, he certainly had a very positive effect on everyone who attended. He just continued to strengthen all of us in the belief that we can do better. Ed was very impressed with the Bridgewater, Brookside, and Centennial developments, but less than enthusiastic with others. He urged us to quickly develop ordinances to support conservation development so as to not waste the many natural resources we have available to us in Washington Township. All in all, Ed built upon the principles that were presented to us by Randall Arendt with some very specific examples.

I’m looking forward to hearing our next speaker.